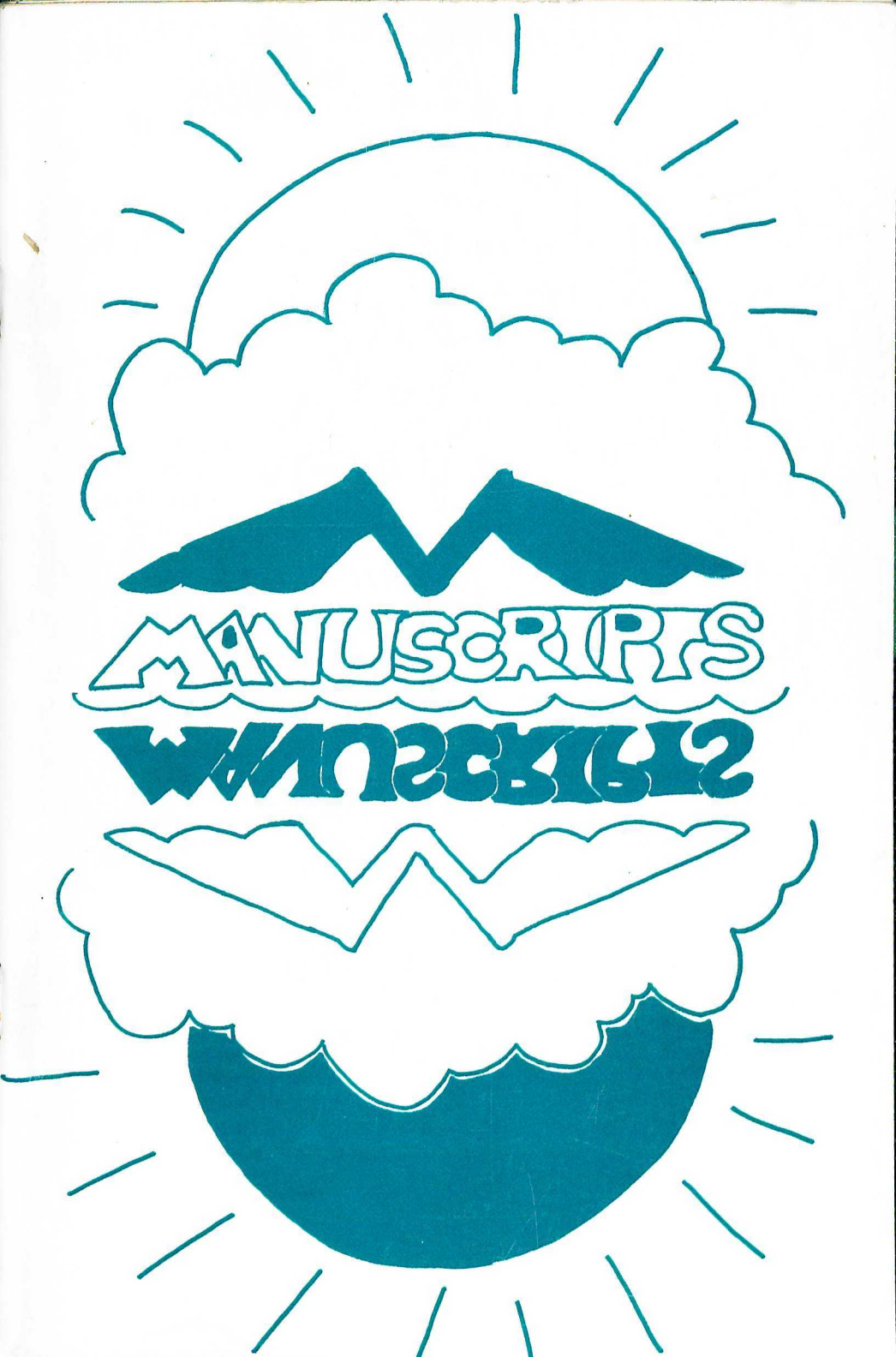
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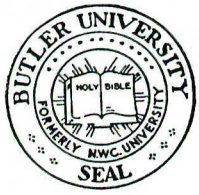

Manuscripts

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Manuscripts is published by the English Department of Butler University once each semester. The material is written mainly by students of the Freshman English, the Advanced Composition, the Creative Writing, and Writers' Workshop classes.

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*Freshman Writing

A TRAVELER'S SONG

Melissa E. Stone

The old Traveler sank into the overstuffed chair, grasping its arms until his knuckles turned white while the lids of his eyes protectively hid the gentle weariness which his eyes would have betrayed. He sighed and creased the lids together even tighter. Then lurching forward as if the effort had caused him pain, the man placed his elbows on his knees and cradled his unshaven face in his hands. Slowly, the tips of his calloused fingers worked their way from his temples over to his closed eyes to spark them open. The Traveler raised his head to reveal quiet, contemplative eyes.

"How have you been, my darlin' children, while I've been away in the West? Though you're strangers, I feel like I know you—by the way that you greet me and offer to feed me and eagerly ask if I'll stay for a rest!"

The Traveler's words echoed through the house as if they were lyrics of a forgotten road song. His left hand rhythmically moved, playing an imaginary guitar.

"Now sit yourselves down in a pile here before me. I wish I had presents for each of your smiles. But I've been travelin' without much to carry—just a broken guitar case with tape on the sides, a bag and a few signs to help me hitch a ride."

With these words, we gathered around the welcomed stranger with hesitant expectations of gifts and treasures from his travels, Knowingly, he smiled and reached inside his bag.

"Now, here is a strange European guitar string. I found it on the floor of a club in Marseilles. It's fat for the third string, but skinny for the fourth string. But I kept it in hopes that I'd use it some day. It's funny how people just keep things that way."

We didn't think that the misfit guitar string was much of a treasure, and disappointment silently invaded the excitement created by the stranger's words. Sensing, this, he leaned back in the chair and looked us each in the face. His eyes blazed and a semi-mocking grin covered his face. His fury quickly died, however, as he shared the story of the strange European guitar string.

The string had been one of the original twelve from an ancient, handcrafted guitar. Made from a white pear tree, the instrument's back symmetrically bowed out to capture the resonance of the silver, thread strings. The guitar's shape allowed the player to caress it to his body, in an act of love rather than in an act of musical creation. Pearl inlays did not grace the frets. Instead, the graceful neck was left naked for the player's hands to seek the proper cord and response.

The pale, fragrant wood of the white guitar complemented its master, Simon. The boy was as symmetric as the instrument with a tall and muscular frame. His face was that of a Roman patrician with a distinctive nose and firm chin. The brown curls which fell from the boy's head onto his face softened these features, however, and left his face as naked as the guitar's neck.

When the boy gathered the guitar into his arms to play, a union occurred between the two. Striking the silver strings to produce a sound which was a combination of music and his soul, Simon was able to dream. Simon played the guitar and became the proud maestro of a symphony orchestra. He played the guitar and became the wealthiest man in this town. He played the guitar and became a world traveler. In turn, the guitar became his mother, sister, friend and lover.

Simon did not actually become the maestro of a symphony or the wealthiest man in his town. However, he did become a traveler of the world and the guitar remained his constant companion. Upon his sixteenth birthday he said good-bye to a home and family he had never loved. They had taunted him for daring to master the primal beauty of the guitar and her music. They tortured him with proclamations that he did not deserve the guitar. And they scared him by doubting his ability. But Simon left before they could convince him of their contrived truths.

The boy became a man during his travels. He not only saw the great cities of the world, but he allowed each to become a part of him. And in turn, the cities each left a formative mark on him. In Madrid, Simon met a classical guitar player whose hands were crippled by arthritis. Simon became his student and learned to master the guitar from the man's words alone. In Munich, Simon learned of hunger. He had run out of money and could find no work. So he lived in Munich's streets and gutters until he got a job playing his guitar. After that Simon was never hungry again. He fell in love in London and experienced the total joy of abandoning himself to a woman. In London, he also learned of total despair and the desire to die when the woman left him.

In Marseilles, Simon took a lover. She was a singer in a club and he became her accompanist. He fell in love with the woman's voice and the aura which surrounded her when she sang, but he cared for nothing else in her. She intuitively knew this. Yet she loved him and dreaded the time he would inevitably leave her. So she sang for him and waited.

"You'll leave me soon."

"Yes, soon."

"And who will play for me?"

"Who played for you before me?"

"You know, many men have."

"And many more will play for you after me."

"Yes, but . . ."

"Yes."

The two continued to perform together in the club under the hot lights for a crowd that could not hear. They crescendoed and then breathed. Pausing, the woman would glance across the stage at Simon as he caressed the guitar more gently than he had ever caressed her. Realizing that the brillant instrument would always mute her presence before him, she desperately vowed to possess the guitar if she could not possess him. Simon knew this.

That night as Simon slept, she crawled from his bed over to the guitar. As she reached for it, the moonlight flooded the room and Simon stirred. Commanding herself not to move, the woman froze until a cloud covered the light and Simon lapsed back into a deeper sleep. Then she held the gleaming guitar to her body and crept into the night.

Simon knew who had his guitar and why. He also knew she would not leave the city. So he set out to find her. It was not difficult, for she proudly performed with it every night in a different club. Several days later he found her. Another man accompanied her on the guitar.

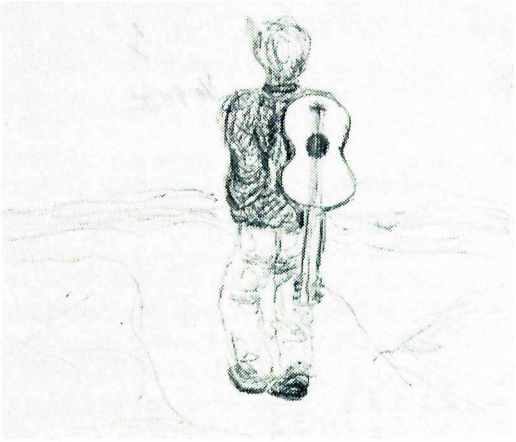
Fury consumed Simon as he saw his guitar handled by another man. His face contorted with each cord of the plaintive instrument and his rationality gave way to insanity. Simon toppled tables, spilled drinks and punched at people in the way as he marched up to the stage. The singer stopped singing and frantically reached for the guitar before Simon could step into the stage lights. As he reached for her neck, the woman violently ripped the guitar's silver strings from their casing. Then with bloody fingers, she triumphantly waved them above her head. The audience applauded and she fell to the floor sobbing.

Simon felt like retching. The pain slowly passed, however, as he looked upon the broken, sobbing woman who hoveled at his feet. He reached down and gently touched her hand. Slowly, the man lowered himself down onto his knees and reached for her bleeding hand. She unsuccessfully tried to pull it back. Mastering her, Simon pulled her hand to his lips and kissed it. She timidly smiled and relinquished the blood-stained guitar. The next day he left for New York with a stringless guitar and half his soul.

"And that, my children, is the story of this string," the Traveler concluded as he pulled the silver string to pieces.

We sat wide eyed and puzzled at the Traveler's feet. He sensed our devastation, but made no attempt to verbally qualify the story. Instead, he reached for the guitar case and opened it. We gazed inside it upon the same beautiful, white guitar with the bowed back and the blood stains. He held it to his body for a moment with his left arm stretched out to grasp the neck and with his right-hand fingers poised above the perfect, shining strings. He confidently studied our faces until he was sure that we understood. And then he caressed the guitar tighter and sang.

"How have you been, my darlin' children,
While I have been away in the West?
Though we are strangers,
I feel like I know you—
By the way that you treat me
And offer to feed me
And eagerly ask if I'll stay for a rest."



ELABORATION

Brian Szurgot

Somebody else is the Sycamore.
I am the whispered wind rumors
of treetop gossip.
Mine are vein switchyards
that thin and stretch.
I am the songbird's hopeshout.

Ice-fingered limbs condescend
to my burden of snow.

I am the mottled flecking
of multicolored camouflage bark.
Mine are the worm tunnels
in the softest skinwood.
I am the crackle of dessicated leaves.
Yet someone else is the Sycamore.

THE ELLINGTON EMERALD

Marta Phillips

Rodney Smythston had never understood his brother when he was alive. He wasn't sure he understood him now that he was dead.

Ralph hated Rodney. Everyone who knew the Smythstons knew that. Now Ralph had died and left his only valuable possession, the Ellington Emerald, to his despised sibling. He had inherited it from Grandfather Ellington, his mother's father, who stipulated the jewel be given to the first born Smythston son. It was the *only* thing of Ralph's that Rodney had ever wanted. Now it was his and he was damn glad about it.

"I don't know why you're so surprised, Diana," Rodney said to his fiancee as they walked out of the lawyer's office. "I know Ralph hated me, but who else could he have left that emerald to? Mom and Dad have enough stones to rival the Crown Jewels and—"

"I *know* all that, Rodney," she interrupted. "But Ralph never did anything nice for anyone . . . especially you!" Diana paused and looked up at him, widening her great green eyes. "What are you going to do with the emerald, now that you've got it?"

Rodney flashed his gorgeous smile. "The first thing I'm going to do is give it to my favorite lady to wear in her modeling show tonight. How would you like that?"

Diana stopped and threw her arms around him, squealing with delight. "Oh Rodney, thank you so much! How did you know I wanted to wear it tonight? It will match my gown perfectly!"

Rodney kissed the top of her honey-blond head and smiled to himself. He could easily read her mind. That was one of the reasons he loved her so much.

The Ellington Emerald was an infamous jewel. It had come into the family in the early 1700s, when they still resided in England. Sir Richard Ellington, a sea captain by trade, had received the stone as a present from some obscure Oriental ruler in appreciation for the trade he brought to the little country. Ellington was all too happy to accept the emerald, being a man who coveted riches. The story went, however, that from the minute he received the stone, his prior good fortune ran out. On the trip home, his ships ran into a great storm which destroyed two of them and mangled the other three. The former fleet limped home, where Ellington found that his wife had run off with another man. She had been the practical one of the family and Ellington died six months later in despair and poverty. The emerald passed on to his scoundrel son, whose wife had the good sense not to let him gamble it away. From then on, the jewel seemed to be handed down to the black sheep of the family, until Rodney's grandfather decided to simply give it to the first born son of his only child, Helen.

That night Rodney sat in the spacious parlor of his family's mansion, getting ready to read Ralph's note to him. Diana had taken the stone to wear in a modeling show for a big department store. He turned the envelope over and over in his hands, finally ripping it open and read:

Rodney,

Well you fiend, you finally got what you wanted. I suppose you were only a little surprised when the lawyer read that the Ellington went to you. You probably thought, "Well, I deserve it." For once, I agree with you, because that stone has brought me nothing but bad luck since the day I got it. I'm giving it to you in the hope that it will do the same for you. If you recall, it was after Grandfather's death that everything awful happened to me—AFTER I HAD THE EMERALD. I ran out of ideas for my book, I started taking speed to get my head going, I lost Marcia because of the drugs and I started shooting heroin. So here I am, at 27. I know you think I am crazy for saying these things but you wait. I know the stone will get to you too.

See you in hell.

R.

"You never stopped being jealous, did you?" Rodney thought.

If it wasn't his good looks, Ralph was jealous of the women, or the way he ate roast beef and mashed potatoes, for God's sake. He picked up the phone angrily as it rang.

"Hello."

"Hi, Rodney? This is Tony Claton."

Diana's agent. "Yeah Tony, what's up?"

"Look, do you know where Diana is?"

"You mean she's not there yet?"

"No."

"Oh Christ, Tony, I can't believe she got lost. You gave her good directions didn't you?"

"Well, sure. I know how she is about finding her way around."

"She'll probably call me soon if she's lost. When does the show start?"

"In about fifteen minutes."

"Oh I'm sure she'll get there. But we better get off the line in case she tries to call me."

"Yeah, you're right. Talk to you later."

"Goodbye."

The doorbell rang as he hung up the phone. As he heard the maid shuffle out to answer the door, he went to the window and peered out. A police car sat in the driveway.

"What the hell. . . ," he murmured to himself. A knock on the door interrupted his thoughts.

"Come in," he called.

Old wrinkled Katie opened the door. In a frightened voice she said, "Mr. Rodney, there's a policeman here who wants to speak with you."

Puzzled and curious, Rodney stepped into the foyer, giving the cop his hand to shake. He was mid-30s and bulging and looked like a red-neck.

"Good evening, sir. How can I help you?"

"Is this yours, Mr. Smythston?" He held out a black case. Rodney took it and opened it, and the green emerald sparkled in the chandelier's light.

"Yes, this is mine. But I don't understand. I gave it to my fiancee, Diana Sutton, earlier tonight."

"What kind of car does Miss Sutton drive?"

"A little Datsun." Rodney began to realize . . . . "Has something happened to Diana?"

The cop paused. "We'll need you to positively identify the wreckage."

"Is she alright?"

"Mr. Smythston, Miss Sutton was killed tonight. A drunk driver hit her car."

Two weeks later in his study, Rodney sat at his large mahogany desk, staring out the window. There was a sharp tap on the door and his mother floated in without waiting for a response.

"Oh Rodney *darling*, I know you're distraught but please try not to look so pensive. I can't *bear* it. I know it's been *awful* with Ralph and Diana both gone . . . ." She paused to dab her eyes with a white hanky . . . "but we simply *must* go on, dear." She plopped herself in a brown velvet chair, having regained her composure. "Now what are you going to *do* with yourself while your Father and I are gone?"

Rodney looked at his mother in amazement. How could such a beautiful thing be so insensitive? Dark hair swept dramatically up on her head, bright blue eyes, a lovely face and well-kept figure . . oh, his Mother wasn't so hard to figure out. She cared about *things*, not people.

Rodney watched her through the same blue eyes.

"Oh, I have plenty to do when Dad's gone, Mother. So don't worry about me."

"But darling, you *can't* work *all* the time. There were plenty of girls before Diana, why don't you call one of them and go out?"

Sometimes she did not know what she was saying. He wanted to slap her but instead changed the subject.

"We'll see. When are you and Father leaving?"

"Oh, in a few minutes. I came in here to ask you something, what was it? Oh yes dear, may I take the emerald with me?"

She looked at him like a little girl asking for a piece of candy.

"Of course Mother. I'll get it for you."

"Thank you, dearest."

His parents had flown off in the private plane on a business trip, so he and Katie were alone in the house. Rodney worked furiously until midnight on some backed-up paperwork. Content, he rose to pour himself a drink and was surprised to realize he hadn't thought of Diana for at least an hour. He glanced at his watch, wondering why his parents hadn't called to notify him of their safe arrival: A Smythston tradition. He stretched his lean torso as he walked to the stereo and flicked on the radio.

". . . have found the wreckage of a twin engine plane believed to belong to Mr. and Mrs. Phillip R. Smythston of Smythston, Inc.," the announcer's voice droned.

Rodney's mind went blank.

Now everything was his. The company, the house, the cars, the investments . . . and the emerald. A week later, he told the bank to keep the emerald and put it in a safety deposit box. But he didn't care if it was safe or not. He laughed bitterly to himself when he remembered how he had thought Ralph was crazy. Now he was the one who was crazy and Ralph was dead like the rest of them. Lucky Ralph. He was one up on Rodney now.

He would have been fine, but the emerald kept haunting him. He thought of it sitting in the box in the vault of the bank, twinkling even in the dark. Finally, he made arrangements for the jewel to be donated to a far-off museum. But after it was sent off, he felt as though it was closer to him than ever. He could neither sleep nor work from the thought. He went to the doctor and got some tranquilizers, but vetoed the doctor's suggestion he see a psychologist. Not wanting to let the company suffer from his malady, he let the other top executives take over most of his work, spending the days on the golf course or at the stables. He avoided staying at the house, for then the strange feeling of being close to the emerald seemed to increase.

Nightmares plagued him: he tried to run away from the jewel but it kept following him. He would wake up exhausted, as though he had been rushing down corridors, glancing furtively behind him.

One night alone with Katie, his work, and the continuous presence of the jewel, Rodney lit a tall, antique candelabra and started down the hall to Ralph's room. As he neared the room, the horrible feeling he had been carrying with him for weeks grew stronger, threatening to knock him over. The candlelights quivered violently against the darkness. He stood with his hand on the knob for a few moments, then quickly flung the door open, desiring to get rid of the haunting. The room was arranged just as Ralph had left it, stacks of books and papers piled everywhere. The presence of the jewel practically suffocated him now and he strode to a window, placed the candelabra on a nearby table and threw the window open. The cool night air rushed in and Rodney stuck his head out the window to take a whiff of it. Regaining his control, he turned to face the room. Where was it? It was in here, he knew it now, he knew it. He had to find it. He opened drawers and overturned them, spilling the contents on the floor, pawing through it and going on. He stripped the bed and ran his hands over the mattress. Nothing, nothing! Where was it? A strong breeze blew in the room, drying the sweat running down Rodney's face and pushing the curtains into the dancing candlelight. A flame shot up the curtain and onto the wall but Rodney did not notice as he glanced around the room and saw the painting above the mantel. It was a small portrait of his Grandfather Ellington. The wall safe! That must be it. He grabbed the chair from the desk, climbed up on it and threw the painting on the floor, turning the safe's dial before he even had a chance to remember the combination. The flames crackled behind him as he dialed 47, 23 . . . what was the the last number? The fire had shot down the curtain to the junk piled on the floor, igniting it quickly. Perhaps the number was 14; he tried it . . . no, that didn't work . . . 41! Yes, that was it! He turned the combination again and finally the safe's door popped open, revealing the familiar black case. He ripped the jewel from the case and, screaming with delight, turned and threw the emerald into the flames around him. As it fell into the fire, the heat jumped up and enveloped him, too.

AT THE BIRTHING OF A DAY

David W. Vandegrift

In the quiet of solitude
In anticipation of light
In the aching tears of loved ones
Comes the inspiration of sight.

Though living is losing,
Though bleeding is right,
Though darkness encompasses—
Be still—for Love shares its light.

Guilty thoughts, shaming thoughts, thoughts of defeat
Shall not linger long
Because trust and love
Shall make remembrances sweet.

Remember with trust,
Remember with conscience aright;
If dark casts its gloom—
Be still—for Love beams its light.

Perchance death takes the body,
But death can't defeat;
It can't reach the soul
And life will be sweet.

SOON AFTER DAWN

Debra Cope

It breathes, silent, burning, joyous morning.
Now I feel its warm touch, its ecstacy.
A resonant silence sounds softly and
Reaches me on my quiet early way.
Pure and lustrous, morning's blessings flow.
This marvelous silence envelops me.
Day's beauty, bright grace! Its blissful powers
Take me now, and I, tacit, whisper "yes."

MADMAN AT NOON

Mark Murray

When I first saw him, I was totally fascinated. He just looked interesting. I wanted desperately to talk with him, even though I knew nothing about him. He was a stranger to me.

It seemed unusally warm and humid outside this afternoon. The weather was hot, terribly hot, even for Chicago in July. My shirt and pants were sticking to my body with perspiration as I moved along the sidewalks in the downtown area. Salty beads of sweat trickled down my face, pooling under my chin and dripping onto my wet chest.

I was walking along State Street on my way to lunch. It was twelve after noon; the streets were very crowded with hungry business people. Masses of bodies were pushing and shoving for all they were worth. Everyone was in a hurry. Pedestrians refused to pay attention to the orange and green flashing walk/don't walk signs that aimlessly warned them about traffic situations.

The man that I found so interesting was stumbling about at a very slow pace, irritating those people that chose to walk faster. Men and women shoved their way around him, glaring and grumping as they went by. I judged his age to be about fifty-five. He was wearing a purple felt hat with a red feather on top that seemed grossly out of place, even for Chicago. The tennis shoes on his feet didn't look quite right with his three-piece corporate blue business suit. He looked forward as he walked, eyes fixed on some indeterminable point along the horizon somewhere. He gave me the impression that he didn't notice or care about the briskly moving world around him.

I thought about trying to catch up with him; he was about half a block ahead of me, walking in the same direction as I. I'm kind of a shy guy so this would take most of the courage that I could muster up. Today had not been a particularly good one. I felt as though I had reached my quota of courage for the day.

I followed the old man for about three blocks. I tried to stay at least a half block behind him so he would not notice me, until I was ready to approach him.

Walking to lunch in downtown Chicago, without any definite destination, being among a great crowd of humans and knowing none of them, can be a terribly lonely ordeal. I went through this hell six times a week. Somehow, I thought the funny old man must go through this all the time. I felt sorry for him, and for myself.

It seemed that the hot and humid weather had made people a little irritable and nervous. I was nervous. I wanted to duck into some air-conditioned shop for a few seconds to cool off and relax before I continued walking with the mob. But I knew if I did that, I would lose track of the man. He was the most important item on my mind right now.

I spent a great deal of time observing him. Then I observed how the strangers on the sidewalk were reacting to his presence. After they passed him, some people began to snicker and laugh. Others laughed directly at him, loud enough to where he could hear them. They didn't care. They had no tact at all. That kind of people makes me angry. He was just a poor misfit thrown into a world of charm machines. He didn't belong, but that didn't seem to bother him.

I looked down at my watch and saw that I had about twenty-five minutes left on my lunch break. I could swear that the second hand was moving faster than it should, stealing away precious moments. I knew of course that there was really nothing wrong with my watch. My mind was probably playing tricks on me.

All of this time the sky had been getting darker. I hadn't really noticed that the weather was changing. It's so hard to tell what the weather is going to do because the tall buildings block the view. It looked like we were going to have one of those light summer rains: a mild storm that comes up on you and then leaves as quickly as it comes. Then it started to sprinkle. The people on the sidewalk were moving closer to the buildings, hoping for some protection from the moisture. The man I was following continued in his path.

It was easier to follow him now that the crowd was moving away. Finally, I decided that I would go up to him and say hello or something.

For some reason, and I don't know why, he stopped dead in his tracks when I was about ten feet behind him. I stopped too. I didn't know what to do. I was becoming increasingly aware of my precarious position. He turned around and looked directly at me with a bland expression on his heavily wrinkled face. Maybe that was the only expression he was capable of. I just stood there. The other people left on the sidewalk didn't notice us.

He turned back around without saying a word and continued his walk at a faster pace. Did he know he was being followed? Was he frightened? I couldn't figure it out. But, I knew that I *had* to approach him now in order to alleviate any fears that I might have caused. I felt very guilty. I started jogging in order to catch up with him.

Then it started to rain very hard. The heavy rain just increased my need and passion to talk with him. The purple felt hat protected his gray hair from the dampness. The tennis shoes gave him that necessary grip to scurry across the now slippery pavement. He was running as fast as his aged frame would allow. I was easily catching up.

When we passed Clark Street, I was almost run over by a cab. My obsession with talking to the man outweighed the normal precaution I exhibit when crossing streets.

I was only about a foot behind him when I yelled, "Hey!" He stopped again dead in his tracks and turned toward me. At that instant life and motion seemed to slow down. What I was experiencing was the feeling of slow motion that occurs seconds before a person realizes that he is going to die.

I looked down at the man's hand. He had produced, from somewhere inside his blue suit, a knife that was about eight inches long. He spoke to me in a velvety soft but forceful voice that posed the question,

"Why don't you leave me alone?" Then he whimpered and drove the knife elegantly into my stomach. he then turned the handle of the knife and began to slice upward to my chest.

I looked down at the bizarre scene with the knife. Then I looked up at the earnest expression on his face. He was breathing heavily and I could smell the stale odor of his breath. Oddly, the people on the sidewalk were not paying attention to this macabre incident. Nobody called for help. For all they cared, the old man could be striking at thin air.

I was surprised at the amount of blood falling to the pavement. It collected in small pools that were washed down the cracks in the sidewalk due to the heavy rain. I was scared, frightened that I would soon be gone.

At first I experienced no pain. I knew that the cracking noise I heard was from the blade breaking through my ribs. The gurgling sound was blood and air seeping from my punctured lungs. I was completely unaware of the pain until moments before I felt like fainting.

He pulled the knife from my body and returned it to wherever it was kept. He moved away from me and continued walking.

The others on the sidewalk didn't even glance toward me. Nobody saw me or cared about what had happened.

I fell to the ground hoping the rain would wash my wounds and make me clean before I was gone. But I knew better.

I began to faint, disappear, fade away.

He had gotten me this time. Today he had won. How much longer could he keep this up? I didn't know for sure, but I would try again tomorrow. He knew that.

That poor, lonely, neurotic, crazy, schizophrenic old man. He was probably proud of his victory. He should have been because its not easy. It's not easy at all.

I shall try again tomorrow afternoon. It should be a better day. Maybe tomorrow will be the day he gives in to me. Maybe tomorrow will be that day that *I* take over. He can't keep killing me forever.

I'm just a figment of his imagination. That bothers him.

TITUS AFTERNOON

Angelo Woodman

Weather's hot
breeze today
feels sweet
real sweet.

Bare thigh
hard seat
sage smell
stone well.

Rose waft
fly buzz
chicken scratch
cotton patch.

Way off
faint sound
tending herd
cow heard.

MOON-LIT NIGHT

Diane Marie Smagatz

Beneath the glow of a
moon-lit night
oak trees whisper to
one another
raindrops christen
cool spring grass
flowers close
to rest.
Stars peek from
between the clouds
crickets chirp
their sweet ballads.
The wind mellows
broken hearts,
stillness blankets
the midnight air.
Beneath the glow of a moon-lit night—
Peace.

PATIENCE

Carla Cowles

"He loves me, he loves me not . . . he loves me, he loves me not . . ." But it's not *his* feelings that worry me now, thought Jess. Oh, dear God, let me know my own mind!

The sun of late afternoon shone softly on the tiny meadow, filtering through the cool trees that bordered it. Jess dodged the dappled shadows cast on the grass, letting the childish game occupy her mind. It was so much easier to play than to think. . . .

Greg had been so easy to fall in love with—or at least, it had been easy for Jess to fall in love. Two years ago, sweet summertime . . . doves crooning, lilacs in bloom, the whole bit. Jess and Greg, about to be seniors in high school, were on top of everything. Combined, they were heads above the rest of the world. Parents, teachers, friends had been leaving them alone together for years, and inevitably, beautifully, they became a couple. From the start, Jess could be comfortable with Greg, and so natural—his gaze touched something behind her eyes, and calmed her. She was so innocently happy.

The shadows were longer now, and Jess found it simpler to dodge the shrinking sunny spots. She felt a soft breeze, and shivered. Autumn again . . . the end of the Garden of Eden. Jess felt the melancholy of the changing seasons like a gentle hand squeezing her heart.

Once he had hit her. Suddenly, furiously, he lashed out, then instantly fell to his knees in remorse. But the sting of his hand on her cheek remained, and Jess could not forgive. Oh, she deserved it—she deserved to be whipped. You never call an adopted child a bastard. But pain from a hand which so often brought kindness and comfort seemed a much

greater betrayal than any word. Greg cried his apologies, cried like a baby for hours, until Jess' mothering instincts overcame her hurt and resentment. The gap between them closed, and all was well—but sometimes, when revealing her secrets to him, Jess felt the twinge of a flaw in her soul, a threat of disaster left behind.

The blue of the sky gave way to dusty rose, and the meadow became a dream world. Jess chased straggling milkweed parachutes, snatching a few from the air and blowing them far from the others. She felt useful, as though she had given them room to breathe and grow. Jess ran through the flying seedlings, inhaling the colorful vapors of evening, giving herself up to the beauty of dusk. She paused attentively, eyes closed, entranced by the nearness of the night.

They had become lovers at her desire—he offered no pressure, or even encouragement. He made love to her softly, skillfully, as she had imagined he would. They were faithful to each other, physically and mentally—both were unselfish and perceptive lovers, totally satisfied with a single, beautiful relationship. An occasional twinge of curiosity nagged at Jess' thoughts—a feeling Greg, already sexually experienced, could not understand. But she believed his claim that having sex was not always making love, and that satisfying her curiosity would only hurt her view of herself. And then, when she felt this touch upon her, the deep ache of longing and love replaced her shallow doubts with truth.

A quiet whistling brought Jess out of her reverie. Greg's tall, slim figure strode through the meadow toward her, and she recognized that good-natured smile wrinkling his face. As she answered it with her own, something caught her eye. Greg held a small object in his hand which glittered and flashed in the dim evening light. Jess didn't know if it was anything important—perhaps it was just a pretty pebble which Greg had found in the woods. But whatever it was, he was handing it to her—and she would take it. Oh yes, she decided, she would take it.

UNTITLED

Suzanne Faeth

Alone,

The cold vacant void,
internal—
a closed, festering wound,
The gnawing emptiness
longing to be filled.

Loneliness,

The awesome barrenness,
Despair—
sparing none,
Companion of the aged,
haunts the seeming unscathed.

Solitude,

The ultimate destiny,
from dust—
born yet once,
To pass beyond
the barrier of Life, alone.

THE MILLIONAIRE

Emmy Leeman

"Are you goin' to the Halloween parade?" the boy asked. He didn't look up from his oatmeal bowl. He knew the answer. His half-grown brother, thin as a scarecrow, knees and elbows protruding, didn't raise his hazel eyes either.

"Goin'? Sure I'm goin'. An' I'm aimin' to take first prize, too!"

The younger boy, a handsome chap of eleven, with square shoulders and a thick mane of curls, sat up straight and looked at Bill with incredulous blue eyes.

"How you thinkin' on doin' that? They'll have floats 'n store-bought outfits 'n everthin'," he protested. "You know one of them town kids'll win, sure."

"Not this year they won't," said Bill with determination, "I'm goin' as a corn shock. Hurry up," he urged, "an' you can help me."

The younger boy trotted along to the barn, peering up into his face, asking questions. Finally, unsatisfied with the monosyllabic answers, he planted his square little body in the barn door and announced,

"I ain't havin' nothin' to do with this dang foolishment. If you want to, go ahead. Make a fool of yourself; but count me out!" He turned to leave, face flushed and set.

Bill, head churning out ideas, looked at his brother, surprised; then his face softened and he said,

"Come on, Kid, and help me. It'll work! Remember last summer when we worked for Ol' Man Wilkins? Planted his big ol' garden an' tended it; pulled weeds out of his soybeans 'till our backs liked to broke; and dug those trenches so the chinch bugs couldn' get from one field t' th' other?"

"Yeah, I remember," replied the other boy, unconvinced. "But this is different."

"No it ain't," exclaimed Bill, "you said then we'd never save sixteen dollars to buy Old Charlie an' you cried an' begged to go swimmin' in the gravel pit or cat fishin' behind Corbens. But we done it and now ain't you glad?"

Bob, thinking of the two of them bouncing on Charlie's wide bay back, splashing through the shallow creek, and laughing until tears came, made up his mind.

"O.K. I'll help. How we goin' to win the five dollars?"

The two boys, blond head and dark close together, worked the whole long weekend. They bound together long stalks of corn with binder twine, careful not to break the brittle leaves. They snipped and measured until the costume fit Bill's skinny frame. Not wanting to stop, they went to eat only when their mother called the third time, with an edge to her voice.

The boys' eyes glistened with excitement as they waited for the school bus Monday morning.

"Now remember, don't tell anybody what I'm wearin'," cautioned Bill. He kicked a rock nonchalantly but the other could tell from the stiff set of his shoulders that it was important to him.

"Don't worry. I ain't tellin' nothin'," promised Bob, convinced by now they could win the five dollars.

Clouds hung low in the sky when they jumped from the bus that evening. A stiff wind blew from the east, whirling orange maple leaves around them as they rushed to feed stock and milk cows. It was dark when, gulping their supper, they loaded the corn shock in the old Model A. The family piled in; the boys rode in the back and held a tattered Indian blanket over their creation.

The band was already warming up as their father parked the truck near an alley.

"Keep it covered with the blanket, Bob!" whispered Bill, as they struggled with the bulky thing.

"Jeez, look at the witches and scarecrows," exclaimed Bob, his eyes wide. Bill struggled into the costume.

"Stick your hand through the hole we left for the jack-o-lantern," directed his brother.

The shock was heavier than he remembered and his thin knees almost buckled as he marched with the other contestants around the band platform. A gang of half-grown boys lurked on the opposite side of the judges. They called out insults or whistled and clapped for the ones they thought were girls. When Bill weaved by in his homemade apparition; they really began the catcalls.

"Hey Ichabod, is that your head?"

"Boy, corn is right!"

"Get a horse!"

Bill tried to ignore them but each time he plodded by, they became more aggressive. They blew out the candle in the jack-o-lantern; tripped him with sticks; and finally stepped on the end of the stalks, by now trailing on the street. Bob, sitting near on a rail fence, blinked back hot tears, humiliated and sad. He saw the three judges, as one, turn their eyes away from the disintegrating corn shock and toward the garish, crepe-papered bicycle and cart. Bill, peering through the little slot, saw this too. Suddenly he could control himself no longer—the jeering, the immobility, and now the disappointment. In one convulsive movement, he shed the now-hated corn shock and leaped into the knot of his antagonists. Arms and legs flailed; feet kicked and stomped; and he battered them with his head. The boys, stunned, stumbled away from the whirling dynamo, but Bill, seeing only a red blur, leaped after the fleeing figures and rode one, half again his size, to the ground. The two tumbled over and over on the graveled street, Bill thwacking the other boy at every turn with his work-hardened fists.

"I'll fix ya'." Smack. "You Bastard." Bang. "Take that . . . and that." Slam. "I don' . . . want . . . their dam' . . . five dollars." Sock. "Someday." Sob. "Someday I'll have a million dollars. . ."

A WRITER'S LESSON

Melissa Stone

"Speak to me, Wise One, and impart unto me those qualities favored by the muses and possessed by the universal scribes whom fortune has smiled upon through the ages. Homer, Plutarch, Shakespeare and Chaucer! Milton, Bacon, Hawthorne and Camus! Frost, Eliot, Ibsen, and Albee! Tell me the mystery of these men so that I, too, may reach the pinnacle of aesthetic bliss through my art. For art is the true . . ."

"Kid, are you telling me that you want to be a writer," the good humored professor interrupted as he lit the stub of a stale cigar.

"Not just a writer, Sir! I want to be a master!"

Dr. Clinkenfroth studied the tall, slim boy who sat on the other side of the mahogany desk. The student radiated a contrived, eccentric air with his immaculately wind-blown hair and dark eyes which every three to five minutes regularly lost their intensity. His mud color sweater boasted the marks of a true scholar, fake leather elbow patches. His Oxford cloth shirt was frayed at the cuffs, an effect which had taken many consecutive washings to achieve. On the floor next to him rested an Army-Navy surplus daypack laden with heavy books. He chose to be addressed as Charles, although his family and friends insisted on calling him Charlie. Dr. Clinkenfroth felt a surge of fondness for him and chuckled as the word "master" crossed the serious boy's lips.

"Surely, you have some ideas that can help in my noble quest?"

"There's nothing noble about writing, my boy. It takes hard work and the formula. Why, everything from 'Paradise Lost' to the latest Harlequin Romance follows the formula," Dr. Clinkenfroth fibbed with glee.

"A formula!"

"Yes, a formula. Not just anyone can master the formula, though. A true writer must have certain qualities before using the formula successfully to catalyze a reaction between ideas and language, to create masterpieces."

"I'm an adaptable person. Just tell me what these qualities are, Sir."

The professor paused, wondering if he hadn't taken the mock lesson just a little too far. Deciding that Charlie was a rare case in need of a lighter view of writing, the professor continued.

"The first quality is masochism."

"Masochism!"

"That's what I said. We both know that inspiration comes only in small, electrical spurts. Consequently, when one hits you must be prepared to exploit it. A writer must deny himself food, drink, sleep, yes and even T.V., in order to capture the inspiration's essence before it fades. Why, John Steinbeck lost 25 pounds writing *The Grapes of Wrath*!"

"But, Sir, I always thought that writing was a disciplined thing. Why, denying one's self food and all is awful. It has nothing to do with discipline."

"No, it's not awful, my son. It's masochistic and that's what you have to be."

"I guess you're right," muttered the confused student.

Dr. Clinkenfroth sighed, but continued. "The second quality you must possess is the ability to be long suffering."

"Isn't that the same as being masochistic?"

"Heavens, no," chuckled Clinkenfroth. "You inflict suffering on yourself to be masochistic. To be long suffering the world shovels it out to you."

"Oh, I see. When I eat onions and get gas that's masochism. But when I get a C on a paper and I accept it, that's being long suffering."

"Ummm, yes. I mean so to speak. Charlie, you . . ."

"Please, Sir, call me Charles."

"But yes, of course. As I was saying Charles, does a C on your paper really cause you to suffer? Do you feel worthless? Do you feel that life is not worth living? Do you question your entire being?"

"I certainly do, Sir!"

"Then you haven't been embracing life, my boy. I suggest that you dirty your hands. Go out and have an older woman for a lover. Drink to excess. Be poor. Develop cancer. Have your mom die. These things will make you suffer, I can guarantee it!"

"Yes, Sir. I'll see to it tomorrow."

Amazed, Dr. Clinkenfroth smothered his cigar in a brass ash tray and moved around to face Charlie. The boy seemed content that the professor was telling the gospel truth. Flustered, Clinkenfroth straightened his suit and continued with new vigor.

"The third quality a writer must have is self-confidence. Every writer must maintain the firm belief that every word, period, semicolon and hyphen he writes encompasses an aesthetic truth which no other human being is capable of disseminating. Then the writer must behave accordingly."

"Are you saying that I have to be arrogant? I mean if that's all there is to being a writer, I mastered that long ago. Don't you think there's more to it than that?"

"Yes, there is, as a matter of fact. Which brings me to my final point. A writer must live a Bohemian lifestyle, an arrogant, Bohemian lifestyle. You must be unconventional. For instance, sleep by day and work by night. Select a particularly dumpy bar and frequent it. Try piercing one of your ears. Eat nothing but Chinese food. Do you see what I mean, Charles?"

"Yes, I see it all! But I'd miss classes if I slept during the day. And drinking at bars and eating Chinese is expensive. And, Sir, I'm certainly not going to pierce my ear!"

"You're missing my point. You have to make sure that your lifestyle reflects the fact that you're a writer. Although you and I know that writers lead normal lives, the public doesn't. So you have to fool 'em. Go Bohemian. I think it will suit you!"

Moving back around the desk, the doubting professor straightened his papers and sat down.

"Charles, what do you think of the four qualities? Do you agree? Do you disagree? Or do you want to give it some more thought?"

The moments ticked away as the late afternoon shadows invaded the room, creating the sense that time had run out for the boy writer. With the shadows, however, Charles' eyes assumed a genuine intensity as he pondered what the professor had said. His hand came up and brushed his hair astray, topping the contrived wind-blown look. He assumed a languid yet attentive pose in his chair as he took off the sweater with the fake patches.

"Dr. Clinkenfroth, I don't believe that the qualities cover it at all. I mean, I disagree with you."

Clinkenfroth smiled.

"No, I'm serious. I don't think that being a long-suffering, arrogant masochistic Bohemian makes a good writer. The only thing that makes a writer good is the ability to see and taste and touch and smell and hear."

"You're on the right track, Charles. Take it one step further."

"Writers write!" the young man exclaimed. "That's it! Writers simply write!"

"Point made," the satisfied man proudly confirmed. "That's all there is to this lesson. Good luck, my boy!"

Walking out the door, Charlie stopped as a mischievous smile consumed his face. "Professor Clinkenfroth, I would still like that formula you were talking about. You know, the one used by Milton and Harlequin Romances."

WINTER

Fran Hart

Spring is dormant, residing beneath winter's
cold, cruel blanket.
Winter is the death of all life.
It kills all beauty and chokes the radiant
sun.
Snow is nature's excuse for a white, winter
lie, saying all is for none.
It glistens like diamond crystals but
is a facade made only to deceive.
Snow flakes are the angels weeping for a
long lost spring.
All hope is not lost, though the birds do
not sing and life comes to a halt,
when winter sheds her sorrows over the
world . . . .

TRUCKERS—A SHORT ROMANCE

Angelo Woodman

Raise Hell
like Beelzebub
you last American Cowboys.
Coffee road,
close quarters cab "Moo . . . . . vem out."
Yea—basic macho.
Gamble your life away with
the inevitable waitress,
only a passing acquaintance.
You grab a bite
and keep on rolling

bourbon
beef
and backslap.

RECIPE STORY: THE LABEL SAYS IT ALL

Marta Phillips

"Well Mr. Johnston, why don't you sit down and tell me what's troubling you?"

"Oh doctor, I'm so disturbed. I'm obsessed with . . . designed name labels!!"

"When did this problem start?"

"It was on my 16th birthday. My Aunt Gertrude gave me an Izod shirt . . . you know, the one with the little alligator on it? She bought me a blue one, but when I found out it came in six other colors, I had to buy them all!"

"Why did you have to buy them all, Mr. Johnston?"

"Because of the *label*!! But that's not the worst of it . . . When I went back to buy the other colors, I passed right by the designer department. I stopped to look at a sports coat and everything I looked at had a label . . . Bill Blass, Yves St. Laurent, Givenchy. Something came over me, doctor. I had to have those labels hanging in my closet! In a frenzy, I bought three red plaid suits by three different designers!! It wasn't until I was walking out of the store that I realized what I had done. I was horrified!"

"How did your parents feel about your buying these suits?"

"Well, they were terribly upset. And I couldn't return the suits because they were designer brands! My father had to sell our second car and use the money he had saved for me to go to mechanics school. I went to work as a bag boy at the local 7-11. I was fine until . . ."

"Until what Mr. Johnston?"

"Until one night . . . just before we closed, a Mercedes Benz pulled into the parking lot and a beautiful blonde walked in the store."

"I don't see what that has to do with your problem, Mr. Johnston."

"Oh you don't understand, doctor! She was wearing a Dior coat, Calvin Klein jeans and a Pierre Cardin blouson! When I saw those labels, I started to tremble . . . I regained my control until she walked up to the counter and asked if we had any Billy Beer. I began screaming, "No, no, no!" The woman ran out of the store but it was too late. I destroyed our Hostess display, ripping up all the Twinkies and Zingers . . . and I squeezed the heck out of a dozen packages of Charmin. I lost my job.

Luckily, I got a scholarship from the local Charmin Squeezer Club which allowed me to go to college."

"When did this problem with labels resurface, Mr. Johnston?"

"It was after I graduated from college. I started working for Estee Lauder as a marketing executive. I didn't realize I would be working with such high fashion people. But every day a new label would wander into the office . . . Diane Von Furstenberg dresses, Gucci gloves, Pucci purses, Gloria Vanderbilt slacks. I wanted to become a part of this label scene. I had to cover myself with labels."

"What did you do then, Mr. Johnston?"

"I would go shopping after work . . . I bought Ralph Lauren handkerchiefs for myself, Anne Klein cologne for my wife, Levi Strauss blue jeans for my son and a Holly Hobby doll for my daughter. I sent my parents an Oleg Cassini ice bucket . . . . for my sister's birthday I sent her an Oscar de La Renta evening gown. Every night I went out and bought a labelled something for my wife . . . Princess Marcella Borghese make-up, and Aigner wallet, Chemise Lacoste blouses, and Candies shoes. She started to get suspicious when I told her to buy Olga bras. And then the bills began to mount. My wife started sewing to cut down on clothes costs. I made her buy Betsy Johnson and Willie Smith designer patterns."

"Well, Mr. Johnston, I'm afraid our time is up for today. Why don't you make an appointment with my receptionist for next week?"

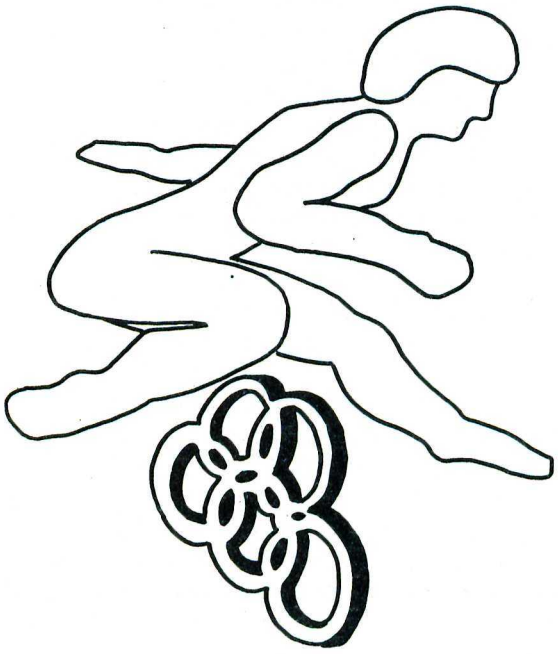
"Do you think you can help me, doctor?"

"Oh, of course. There's nothing to worry about. But I'm off to an hour of tennis. I've got a brand new Stan Smith racket and a can of Billie Jean King tennis balls I'm anxious to try out."

TIDE

Diane Marie Smagatz

The tide will reach out
and fall back with contentment—
wiping away paths
of human resentment.



AN UNWORKABLE SYSTEM

Richard Moore

James Butts, a twenty-four-year-old black man from California, represented the United States as a triple-jumper in the 1976 Olympic Games at Montreal. Butts acquitted himself well, receiving a silver medal for second place with one of the top ten jumps ever made. To get his chance at Olympic glory, Butts had to spend a full year, not just the usual regimented dedication of a world-class athlete, but in a back-breaking, mind-wracking regimen that most Americans would not be willing to endure. Butts, a college graduate, worked at two full-time jobs—as a supermarket boxboy and a night watchman—in order to support himself, his wife, his infant son and his mother. In addition, he

trained religiously for four hours each day in his track and field specialty. On most days, the grind left him less than four hours for sleep or family. Many of the factors that forced Butts into such a situation in order to fulfill a dream are directly attributed to outdated codes of amateurism that govern international athletics. The rules stipulate that athletes may receive no compensation that is a result of athletic skill—Olympic hopefuls may not even receive payment for coaching!

This is no plea for government subsidies for athletics. Taxpayers are overburdened now with supporting enterprises that should succeed or fail on their own. Those who say Butts should abandon his quest if the road proved too difficult are not right either. Americans demand champions, or at least contenders, in events such as the Olympics. Many are more than happy to pay for their demands. Only a system that has no reasonable place in contemporary society stands in the way. The barriers of amateurism should be removed.

Amateur rules did not develop during the ancient Greek Olympics. In fact, participants there nearly always received monetary reward, even to the point of becoming wealthy because of sporting success. It was the revival of the games in the nineteenth century, a time of gentleman athletes, that inspired the no-pay-for-play standard. A gentleman who had time for sports did not need to receive compensation for his efforts. Indeed, he would have been insulted by the attempt. Such were the men who organized the system and, despite a change brought early by the search for success, their legacy lives on. In a time where the greatest athletes often emerge from humble origins in pursuit of success in professional sports, the aristocratic notions of amateurism find few adherents. We have long since passed the point when only those who can afford leisure indulge in athletics.

Besides being outmoded, amateurism is easily sidestepped by the economic systems of individual countries. Although they are not to receive any reward for their achievements, athletes in socialist countries are given subsidies as a part of the country's philosophy. Amateur officials dismiss this fact, saying the athletes are simply being treated as

other citizens in those nations. Meantime, James Butts works and trains twenty hours a day. However, Butts had been able to utilize an American means of circumventing the amateur code. By accepting an athletic scholarship, Butts, as do thousands of others every year, traded his skills for a tangible reward. No serious quarrels can be made for outlawing such scholarships to obey the letter of the law. It merely points out the double standard that exists. Why could the graduated James Butts not receive payment from a meet director who was aided by the athlete's presence in a competition that many people paid to see?

The amateur rules are not followed anyway and that is the best argument for their abolition. "Shamateurism", the under-the-table payment of amateur athletes, is widespread and generally acknowledged. It is also winked at by many of the same self-righteous officials who scream when serious reform for the system is suggested. Dwight Stones, who has won two bronze Olympic high jump medals, was suspended permanently from competition last year for receiving money to appear on the A.B.C. "Superstars" television show. Stones freely admits that the thirty-thousand dollars he earned was only a fraction of the illegal payoffs he accepted over the years. The money allowed him, after college graduation, to maintain a Corvette sports car, a beach apartment and a comfortable lifestyle while "unemployed." If anyone believed Stones was worth the bribes, why couldn't he accept them honestly, and pay taxes on the income?

Purists can maintain that the economics and finance involved have little space in the world of sports. The fact is that those "evils" are there, and trying to hide them merely compounds the problem. Few arguments for the retention of amateurism can be taken seriously. Tradition remains the major reason that athletes are expected to compete only for good will and internal rewards. In American society where professional athletes are held in higher esteem than amateur, the outdated system is neither understood nor admired. As the socialist countries allow subsidies for athletes, our athletes demand their ability to be justly compensated. Perhaps the rulers of amateur sport will join the twentieth century before it ends and initiate reforms in their code.

AN AFTERNOON IN THE OUTER WORLD

Mary Ellen McLeaster

The rain falls heavily on the earth, soaking the ground with its life-giving powers. Buried beneath the roots of the grass, a small earthworm is working its way to the surface. The abundance of moisture held in the ground forces the worm to seek the open air. Stalks of grass laden with rain drops quiver as the reddish-brown, finger-shaped head emerges from between the blades. Slowly, and with great effort, the body of the earthworm is drawn out of the hole. The muddy ground of the surface engulfs the worm as it struggles to be free. A moment later a tiny "thuck" is heard as the tail leaves the opening of the worm's tunnel. Surrounded by tall, dripping blades of dark green grass and shallow puddles of rain, the earthworm begins its journey of an afternoon in the outer world.

Sluggishly, the worm makes it way through the lofty grass. The outer coating of slime on its body lets the earthworm glide easily over the muddy turf. In a rhythmic motion, the segmented body contracts and expands to move the worm along. Stretching to its full length, the body divisions grow larger and the worm covers about half a foot. The worm then compresses, the end segments shorten and move forward toward the head, pulling the worm onward. The round-bodied creature repeatedly stretches and compresses, working its way through the jungle of towering grass.

Laboriously, the earthworm travels over the saturated turf. In its next extending movement, the head encounters a sensation of a different surface. The worm stops. It raises its head, lifting up the first five segments of its body. The head of the earthworm gently waves to and fro as if scouting the misty area beyond. After sensing no signs of danger, the worm resumes its crawling position. The pavement is wet and gray, and the rusty-colored earthworm stands out against the unnatural background. As it moves, the worm leaves a thin silvery trail that glistens in the fading dusk. Halfway across the puddle-filled sidewalk the worm's rhythm is broken. The trail of freedom is halted. Safe from its water-logged home, the earthworm has become weary of its journey. So, for the night, the earthworm has settled within a shallow crack of the sidewalk.

PAINTED LADY

Gina Zellmer

The Painted Lady
does not walk alone at night
although inside,
she feels very much alone.
She feels a kind of emptiness
that constantly grows
inside of her,
though no one knows.
All they can see
are the black tears
she cries.


PRESS

A BUTLER DAYDREAM: IN EARNEST FROM PASTURES TO STREETS?

(That the author should be as brave!)

Tanya Beyer

Would we ever have a full day of rest or of business, either a holiday untrammeled with the shortest chore or a toilsome day unrelieved by the merest luminous, bracing moment when we could get above our labors? Society's prime producers, knowing that life generally and at best is devotion to one's obligations, by habit designate chains of days as work days, and pause seldom for a stretch or for supper. That is one worthy style for spending ourselves; thus we are disciplined. But I, a lounger and a honey bee, will not schedule myself. In winter, the season of work for the city-pent, I deviate, I mingle sleep, song and struggle in every twelve hours. If production time gets squandered, my profit is in the pile-up of often-unsettling but often-invigorating revelations that come to the purposeful dawdler. Soon I've got to declare some.

I have lived sour evenings; yet wintery college evenings, various as they were, amount in my head to blessed summations of each day. My small work corner with shelf, glowing lamp shade and two enormous windows was full of me and readings from books for timely courses. Time was rolling, theories weaving themselves. My brain mumbled. "Today . . . " it remarked serenely, "that was for the best . . . tomorrow I'll have to save myself, and there's her, and him . . ." Then I was looking up and all around.

It was significant to see that night's darkness and my quarters' lamp light met as they did at the panes. Clarinets and bells on FM radio made country-afternoon music; leaves clapping, cool sun lashing shadows apart as I had seen these in summer, I saw tonight without eye effort. Beauty brews above us, to slide in rays down for whoever to notice. I'd like to be a brewery of love for that, and I crave chances to distribute it. Wow! but there was splendor in the city, and I had a past which I could cast into the future: forests. In winter at college I re-observed petals in rings on moss, mid-year's coldest gold twilight sun seeping through conifers, radiant wetness, one thrush once in song, licking wavelets, and

evergreen breath. For these things, shares of Himself and also of the universe, God be thanked. With what deliberation these must be authorised, us with them. I had Scriptures on the shelf to read . . .

Look at that red . . . The sock on top of the door . . . prairie bison . . . lovers tenting soon in summer . . . . Providence—look . . . I have a warm beige coat; I have ears . . .

Now, what's outside—shall I close the drape, fold this work? Write a note, dial 'Himself' and scoop him out of his evening books and send cheerful diffuse dialogue to make his scholarly train of thought for nought? . . . My shoes—gone? . . . Money—Friday, buy her birthday present . . . in the offing, marching weather? . . . For a moment in the wooden chair I was blazingly confident, all my cares rewards.

Then I must have gotten on my feet, blossoming, slinging my arms from myself. What was moving down below this aerie of my friend's and mine, looking down to the night's frost on snow, to still and colorless cars, walk-ways trimmed by snowpiles put aside by the ploughs and hardened, the street of cement-bottomed ice ruts, and receding apartment fronts? Often men, great-chested, or on lanky legs like stilts, went trafficking down there, grey and pink under the night lights. Who was there this night, this particular one of a billion typical hours?

In the far gutter was someone hulking in dark clothes, with hair boiling around his head. Bowing and still except for the hair that billowed and twined, then sidling with raised hands, he was coming into line with the window here. Headlights laid a shine along the icy median of the street, so that gold spread around his feet and his shadow sprawled half-way back to one of the apartments—or her shadow? The car, an immense one, glided up. The person lunged into its course. I saw that the driver had braked convulsively, for the car's body leapt ahead of the tires as they rolled over ice. The car roared and swerved in an arch around the person who stood with bent knees on an ice bar. The gold flowed away, dark slammed over the person before the reddest rose of the car's tail lights shot him, and trailed away.

I asked myself: "He knew him? . . ."

But there the person waited, face groundward, elbows crooked and hands as limp as if skinned. Then I wrapped my hand around the stem of my lamp and peered without any motion.

When there came a similar advance of car light, and the by-stander sprang with arms like a diver's, and the Volkswagen van veered with loud-grumbling engine, whisking on with a red pair of winks from its

rear, I felt internal bucklings and plungings and radiation. If I had begun to be aghast, I felt juices brimming. If quailing, stilled and dizzy to anticipate a body wrecking, I seemed compelled to go there, as if I were the other pole opposite of desolation and drawn magnetically to meet that on the street. For days hadn't I been launching myself to proclaim things that were true but thrown out, as is the food we waste? Who all made me and showed me my conduct? . . .

I stamped into shoes my feet had moulded for themselves. "I have heavy work to do—no coat for me. . ." Flinging my door so it shut behind me, I galloped down this passage and that and these stairs and some more on the way to the street-side exit.

What, though, what do I know to tell, to shout, to connect to him? He will be big; he will be mad. But possibly he feels childsized and will dart and wrestle . . . What do I know!? How can I swear to him?!

I remembered when I was certain I knew nothing and was nowhere. I could hear but was struck silent and thrashed in bed. There had been at first substance, which could be anything as invisible as oxygen, and opposing this was abstraction, more and more renderings from all the substance I had sensed. One year I had come to school and sunken—where was the hitch from me to anyone, and generally: Why? I later conceived of more than hitches, more than a lattice, but an edgeless knit with tens of dimensions, with a source of course—yet where? Was I ever quite sure? No . . . but between the substance and the bit of abstraction which I recognised in my old era, there have been theories—grand necessities—and biological marvels, part proven, and Scriptural promises, and mystical biddings and tidings. They humble and exalt, thread each to every.

Should I say 'Jesus' to him . . .? Shock, implore and exhort, in what terms? If he is bitter when we talk, can I insult him so he chases me and leaves the street?

I wanted to speak from my little store, and convince by it. Sometimes before I had barely tried, but my hearer was older and said: "I know." Once, full of ardor, I had tried to budge the foundation of a soul, speaking shallowly as if to scatter a seed or so. Thereafter I had had to leave because the person had said so, and I was as mortified then as a farmer skunked.

On the last two stairs I consulted the past: "How are we when we want to die?" Hold, though—do you know? How are different people's

trips to hell? Looking down, surmising by recall, I could and can propose that, figuratively, we are marooned, upended, and violent at least inside our skins. If we don't hate we are awash in dire hatefulness, our agonies often thrusting and surging. A rescuer might go and plant his feet, call and throw loving signals.

"Do I dare, and can I stand through this?"

In college I was strong on my feet thanks to the forests, so that people laughed when I forgot not to hike in hall-ways, throw doors, or heave at anything whatever. But I always lost in sports competitions. Could I pull a storming body? Going out, I staggered and slithered around the street-side door's edge.

"Hello!" said the air of this winter night, and bit my face. The sidewalk passed here, with a snow bank at the level of the street to my eyes. Where was the person in the street? Spilled, and killed?

Sometimes I have wished I could live out in winter without wrappings, like a satyr.

My cares made me bound to the street where the ice swaths shone below the far-apart street lights, and the cold cars slouched in the gutter full of hard snowballs left from ploughing. A carcass? Possibly hit and thrown onto a lawn . . . A stir alerted me through two bleary car windows, the back and windshield of a parked car. I walked over there. Illogically I called out what I wondered: "Where do you live?"

I neared this figure, male or female, looking as if I hadn't asked the question.

"I saw you jump in front of two cars, and they just went on!"

In sweat shirt and jeans the hefty-bodied someone drooped in the murk before the car radiator. Man or woman? Could I hear its voice?

"I'm cold!" But I wasn't; I was urging. "If I am, you have to be, so come in with me, please?

'I wish I knew where you came from—"

I meant this introduction: I was quite happy tonight and longed to extend that . . . I have never seen a suicide, nor have I wanted to commit it, but have feared I did, and feared I would, and pray never to see appeal in doing so, though I might, for tragedy in all likelihood is waiting . . .

"I love you"—I didn't say that but opened my lips to start until wondering whether I loved to express myself, especially when the expression would be the antithesis of the receiver's thought. Then I knew I really loved the person, floodingly and almost possessively.

"Come in my building—your hands should be frozen, for one thing! You know where I come from? It's cold there, like this, but I love it! I love the world! That means I love you, and you're wrong, all wrong out on this street getting in front of cars. I understand you're very sad—worse, to be sure! I've felt that way, but it was short. Maybe yours wasn't, maybe all different, but anyway . . . ." I introduced so clumsily. The face, not masculine or feminine, was watching now with shady eyes.

I have a multitude of things to say to you, but where are they now? They only move around in restful spells of mine, when I dawdle, or straggle through a reading. But they are glad, nearly-conclusive thoughts that could be phrased for you if only we were off this street and something would initiate—whatever initiates these . . . thoughts of piety? Everyone must have his; perhaps they can't be told, but if they could, I might hearten you. What in the name of grace am I going to do with you?

I could hear a vast, grinding engine of the bus type. When I faced east I saw a bus, and drew stiff.

"I would like to take you somewhere with me to a warm place, because for one thing I have a multitude of things to say to you, and you would feel better, I prom—I swear—"

The person stepped clear of the car and set his or her feet to stand nearer but apart from me—to gaze or appraise or challenge me? Should I say that I have thought that nobody not physically and incurably ruled by pain wants to die? But this person might be cancer-ridden or somehow doomed . . . He, or she, was shivering like me, frenziedly. Now the eyes had truly constricted, the brow forming a downward arrow. Laughter, deviltry, or exultation? Who'd brought about what?

I warned: "Step back for the bus."

In a stride the person, wavering on the ice, swept to me and pressed one arm across my back and walked us out into the bus's lane. I heard the grind and the frozen stuff smashing, felt cloth and fat and the furious tremors of us both. It was a soft impelling arm enwrapping my cold back, and its sensation not just claimed me but excluded any consideration except, with a sprinkling of humor, that I could savor so fatal an embrace until the death which the bus would deal to us.

Yet the grind sank in pitch. The wobbling light stabilised and ice-popping ended. My dazed eyes stared and registered a pavement with the sheen of a hockey rink out from beneath the bus that had stopped to wait.

My companion had my wrist and directed me, in the yellow light falling down from the windshield, to the curb side of the bus where we boarded. He, or she, stuck money in a ready slot, and then, up the steps and down a dazzling aisle I traveled with the eyes of all the riders and of the driver ogling. I was bound to be for a little while with this stout stranger, not man nor woman, as matters yet enthrallingly proved. No one phrased his wonderment, and the driver must have shrugged, and then drove.

We took seats. Onto the long black window my leader wilted in tears. If passengers, forward and backward, were examining us, shivers now consumed us, and anguish and blinding tears and other elements perhaps quietly gushed as if from all his skin—or hers—occupying me too. The thick, sleek arm on the denim knee slid off to hang, then was replaced, and again dejectedly slid off. We sat pushed into each other to warm up, but were chilled all the way in, it seemed.

"I'm sorry, sure sorry that I tried to kill you with me."

"I—" I breathed to my buddy eagerly, "I wasn't afraid with your arm around me as you had it. I don't know why but it kept me calm—"

"I didn't have my arm around you. Or did I—I don't know. I don't know."

"For a while you sure did."

"Oh, well, I been trying to die; I'm a waste, my memory—"

"I held your wrist."

"Then we were getting on the bus."

"Yeah."

I squashed myself against the back rest in hopes of pressing some sort of warmth from its inside to me. What a providential bus and situation! I might clench my arms and ponder there, and would set off a rising of eloquence by which I might brighten him, elate him—or her—or plant a sort of root-stock. This would exercise me as it benefited him or her, and so the bus had come . . .

"The bus stopped like I never saw one do—"

"On ice."

"Yep."

"God!" sobbed the sufferer into his or her folded arm on his window—or her window. "I guess it stopped for you."

"No-o-o, no. It stopped for us."

He or she cried languidly.

"You came down for me, and the bus stopped for us both—I did not expect this; I'd have said 'impossible.' . . ."

"Where do you come from?"

I said what I first thought, a line of high ambiguity: "I come from many places." Then I went on: "You come from lots of the same. We know some of the same things—"

My tired and flaccid neighbor nodded.

"That means," the eyes looked across the bus, despite mucous and a fatigued blood tinge, with a green-blue lustre, "that you and I combined—and this bus picked us up."

"I have a lot of friends—I don't know some—" I strained.

"I thought I was without."

"You—broke off?"

"I-I would have."

"Disaster."

The passenger bowed and we shook with our chills, which needed time to be shaken off. The other people now appeared to drowse, snuggling on shoulders, panels and cushions.

"I'm going back to the parish."

The bus that night went down to the city's heart. My comrade took coins from a pocket to pay my way back uptown, whereupon we saluted, I to her or him—that pale, drenched and unspecialized figure—and she, or he, to me. Aboard a northbound bus, I listened to mental scrolls of eloquence unreel for nobody yet but me, as I rode to re-join my various mates of before.

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MANUSCRIPTS